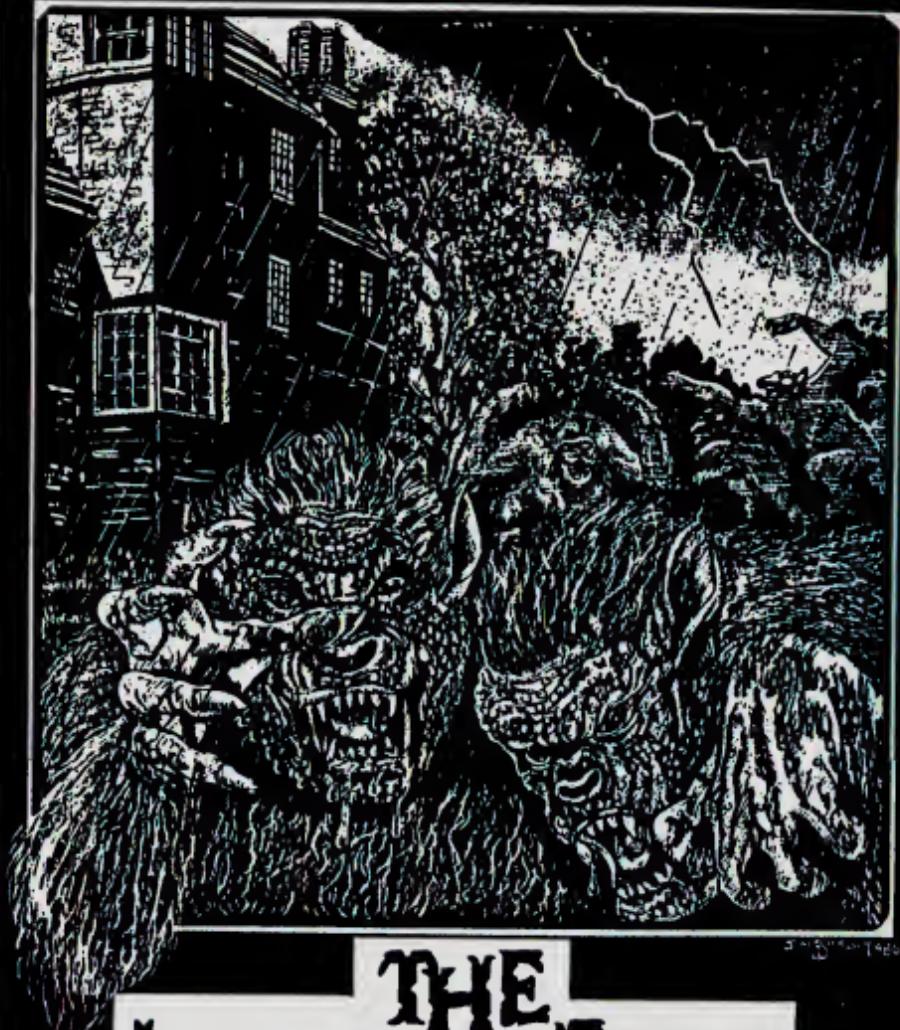




**TALES OF  
LOVECRAFTIAN  
HORROR no.1**

**\$4**



THE  
LURKING FEAR

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# TALES OF LOVECRAFTIAN HORROR

May 1987

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Number One

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# LOVECRAFTIAN HORROR

By W. H. Pugmire

Lovecraftian horror is my obsession. When nothing else can cure boredom, I need only turn to one of countless books or magazines, and suddenly my gloom is gone. And when I'm feeling very bold, I try my hand at writing my own. That I have failed at coming close to writing anything worthwhile is no matter: the joy of making the attempt is great.

And yet, when I decided to finally try to edit a magazine of Lovecraftian fiction, I discovered that I was a bit uncertain as to just what I was looking for as an editor. I found that I was unable to describe what I meant by "Lovecraftian horror." I knew that I did not want trendy Cthulhu Mythos fiction. I am not anti-Mythos; but I hate the way it has usurped other forms of Lovecraftian horror. Indeed, one of the tales in this issue was rejected from a Lovecraftian publication for not being "Mythos." The Mythos has been overused, and most of the newer tales bore me, be they by fans or pros. I find very few of them truly "Lovecraftian," seeming more like the kind of thing Derleth was wont to write. I have no intention of publishing Cthulhu Mythos stories in TOLH. The small press has the delicious ability to act as an alternative to what is trendy, popular, and commercial. It is this alternative side of Lovecraftian horror that I hope to present.

Lovecraftian horror conveys mood, atmosphere, and situations that were dear to H. P. Lovecraft and are evident in his own spectral and cosmic fiction. Because of the brilliant scholars who write for Crypt of Cthulhu and Lovecraft Studies, we are gaining a new understanding of Lovecraft and his fiction. Just as Lovecraft scholarship is growing, so too should Love-

craftian fiction go forward, becoming much more than it has yet been. Instead of writing formula stories, we can use Lovecraftian themes as a foundation on which to try to build our own unique fiction. Lovecraft is wedded to his tales; they are personal expressions of things he felt deeply. He spoke in his own voice, singing his own visions, his fears, his cosmic dreams. A good Lovecraftian tale should, I feel, express things that move us to profound emotions. Using HPL's fiction, his dreams as they are recorded in his published letters, we can find inspiration for our own tales of dread. Writing horror fiction is not an attempt to escape from reality; rather, as it was with Lovecraft, it is an expression of those aspects of reality that move us creatively, as artists. And as humans. The horror takes second place to our moods, our thoughts, our vision and our dreams. Horror is merely the beloved tool with which we express our own fantastic reality.

This issue, I hope, reflects the wide variety of fiction that has been inspired by Howard Phillips Lovecraft. His influence has been tremendous and varied. Here we find tales set in ancient houses, a theme quite dear to HPL; and, too, we have one spectral tale set in a cemetery, a setting that haunts many of Lovecraft's stories, and a place which he was wont to haunt in real life. We have stories of dislocations in time and space, tales of earthy horror and of cosmic dread.

I welcome your comments, and may be reached at the address below. I lack confidence as an editor, and your reaction to this issue will help direct any future issues I may be brave enough to attempt.

My thanks go to the artists and authors who have helped me with this project, who share with me

a love for HPL and his literary creations. It is to his memory and his fiction that Tales of Lovecraftian Horror is dedicated. My deep thanks go to Robert M. Price and Cryptic Publications for making this magazine possible.

Wishing you my dark dead love,  
I beg to remain,  
Ever Thy Srvt.,

Wilum Hopfrog Pugmire, Gent.,  
537 North 66th  
Seattle, WA 98103



# THAT WHICH DEVOURS

By Walter C. DeBill, Jr.

I felt a pang of nostalgia when I turned from the sidewalk down the dark walkway to the old Haemlich place. The tall elms were in full leaf and the streetlight at the corner did not penetrate far into the gloom. Edgar had let the skirt of willowy shrubs grow long and unkempt and the line of the roof was obscured by the trees; the few scattered window lights only emphasized the dark bulk of it. But I remembered from childhood long ago the beautiful limestone Victorian edifice with the long wooden porches upstairs and down. It was the seat of my mother's family, rich in wistful memories. After my grandmother's death my older brother Edgar, the wild brother, the unpredictable one, had moved into it.

That was natural. He had always taken after that side of the family with their wildness and imagination and touch of madness, while I had adopted, or, perhaps, been forced into, the stodgy conservative mold of our father's clan, stolid bourgeoisie all. A business degree at the state university, a tranquil apprenticeship in Father's business, the president's desk at Father's death—a career heartily approved of by every member of the Armstrong family. Except for Edgar, that is. He thought it an appalling waste of life and taunted me endlessly with the dullness of it. For Edgar life was one escapade, one scandal, one dreamy quest after another. In adolescence it was girls and liquor and cars, in young manhood it was travelling to remote corners of the earth, often in trouble with the authorities and frequently wring for money. I envied and despised him at the same time.

I was glad to have him take the old house under the elms when Grandfather Haemlich died. It divided up part of the family estate

fairly without disturbing my household in the big white house eight blocks away. And after all, Edgar was more of a Haemlich than an Armstrong. He certainly had more than a bit of the strangeness that had culminated in our mother's death in a mental institution when we were children. His adventures were reminiscent of Grandfather Haemlich himself, and now he was repeating Grandfather's black magic scandal. In Grandfather's time it had been scandalously evil; now it was scandalously foolish. I was afraid Edgar would make us a laughing stock.

Yet at the same time I was jealous. More and more as I entered middle age I felt the stifling monotony of my life and the secret fear grew that Edgar had been right all along, I had been a fool and would grow old and die knowing that all adventure and excitement had passed me by. It grated on me more and more the way Edgar boasted of his inheritance, Grandfather's memorabilia from the four corners of the earth and above all the treasure trove of magical and alchemical manuscripts and the paraphernalia he had amassed to use them.

He had alternately ignored and mocked my protestations that they were legally as much mine as his, that no division had been agreed upon, and countered saying that he was better equipped to make use of them. So now I had come to confront him, armed with an impressive legal document drawn up by the firm's lawyers stating my claim and intention to sue.

There were lights in at least four rooms, upstairs and down. That was unusual for him. In the past when I had driven by there had never been more than one and that usually upstairs. I stepped up on the porch and rang the door-bell beside the oval-paned door.

I listened for his footsteps but could hear nothing stir within.

I rang again. This time I thought I heard a board creak upstairs but no footsteps. The light was on in the hallway behind the front door but I could see no sign of Edgar. The doors to the parlor on the left and the den on the right were open, as was the door to the kitchen at the rear. The stairs were visible on the left side of the hall but nothing stirred. I remembered that there was a landing at the top of the stairs but I could not see it from where I stood.

"Edgar!" I called, irritated at the wait. Of course! He had seen me coming up the walk and decided to amuse himself at my expense. I tried the doorknob gently. It was unlocked. I stepped into the hall. The parlor was unlit but the light from the hallway showed me that he was not in there, unless he was playing a really childish game of hide and seek. There was nothing at the top of the stairs.

I looked into the den. The light was on in there but I didn't see Edgar. I remembered the big old room, with its great fireplace and leather couch and armchairs, its walls decorated with Indian swords, Masai shields and spears, ancient muskets and daggers. Edgar shared Grandfather's outlandish tastes enough to leave it as it had been.

The last time I had been here he had sat smirking in a sumptuous leather armchair in the middle of the room as I labored to persuade him to the common sense step of selling some land we owned jointly. During his longwinded and asinine rebuttals I found myself staring at the remarkable volume on the table by his right hand. It was a huge folio, as thick as a big dictionary, with an intricately decorated leather binding and tarnished silver clasps. The spine was split at the top showing the ends of the gatherings and if there had ever been a title there it was no longer discernible. Closed it took up the whole table. He must have been gloating over it rather than reading

it. He noticed my attention.

"No, little brother, it's not from Grandfather's collection. I bought it myself." That in reference to our longstanding dispute over the ownership of Grandfather Haemlich's collection and quite likely a lie. And he knew how I hated being referred to that way. I began to fidget and move aimlessly around the room while he blathered an interminable monologue of childish heckling and fatuous argument. There was no lamp on, only a bit of sunlight from one undraped window. That's why I didn't notice what was on the bookshelf until he infuriated me further with some juvenile taunt and I spun on one heel to turn my back on him.

There on a partially cleared shelf a foot in front of my nose was a cage containing a large plump rat. Not a white or jet black or calico laboratory rat but a filthy brown whisker-twitching glitter-eyed barn rat with stained teeth.

I actually let out a little squeal and jumped back. Edgar cackled uproariously.

"I forgot you're not familiar with my pet." He articulated the word "familiar" archly as though it held some secret joke; then he burst into laughter again. "A delicate creature, you see. I must take great pains with its care and feeding." He was still laughing when I slammed the front door and stomped down the walkway and I was still paying taxes on that worthless dab of pasture.

This time I was certain I had heard the floor creak upstairs, followed by light muffled footsteps, as of stocking feet. He was up there all right, barely able to stifle his laughter I'd say. I climbed the stairs soundlessly, easing each foot gently onto the old threadbare runner, hoping to catch him at his own game.

At the top I looked both ways down the dimly lit upstairs hall. I wasn't sure where the footsteps had been. There was a lighted doorway to my right. I tiptoed down to it and looked in. It was

the big upstairs study, the one Grandfather had never let us enter.

It was a long high-ceilinged room, dark from the ancient figured wall paper and heavy drapes and dark hardwood floorboards showing between the worn oriental carpets. It was lined with endless bookshelves, many glassed in, all filled to overflowing, and yet an open chest by the lamp in the middle of the room was full of more books. There were few chairs, Grandfather had rarely allowed visitors, but many tables. They were of all sizes and descriptions and cluttered the floor, making it difficult to walk around. Scattered haphazardly on their surfaces, covering them completely and threatening to spill over onto the floor, was a phantasmagoria of evil: all the symbols and accoutrements of black magic and necromancy were there, braziers inscribed in unknown alphabets, bottles and vials of unidentifiable substances, obscure talismans and parchments covered with cryptic formulae and diagrams. A large crystal ball sat on a stand in the midst of a table full of human skulls in various states of deterioration. On a table near a window was a collection of archaic chemical ware, a long-necked retort, alcohol burners and primitive distillation apparatus. A blackened spot of wallpaper marked the failure of one of Grandfather's experiments.

The chest by the lamp revealed an incredible collection of manuscripts and early books on magic and the occult that I judged would outclass most of the museums and private collections of the world. On the table in the lamplight a great tome lay open revealing long columns of Latin in a richly textured medieval Gothic hand. I shuddered when I recognized it as the same volume I had seen downstairs on that earlier occasion. I looked carefully around the room for a rat cage but saw none.

Next to the manuscript was a reference work on medieval Latin and a pile of notes on yellow legal size paper, apparently an attempt

to translate the ancient Latin. It looked like Edgar had been reevaluating his earlier work, for there were a number of notations evidently made with the red felt-tipped pen lying across the top sheet.

". . . most fearsome familiar spirit . . . tempts the (necromancer) with (its) uncanny power and fierceness."

Here there was an interlineation in red: ". . . turn on (master?) . . . devour . . . body and soul." Then the older notes continued.

". . . created from earthly creature. Beast in womb or reptile in egg exposed to . . . influenced from the darkling spheres . . . at birth not wholly of earth . . . if fed upon unclean spirits of the earth and (relics?) of the brilliant and terrible among men . . ."

I drew back, repelled and fascinated. I looked around, appalled at the accumulated evidence of my Grandfather's and brother's aberration. Had Mother's premature dementia overtaken my brother? I didn't like the look of some of the skulls—they were too white, too fresh. In the dim lamplight they appeared oddly scratched. There was another chest next to the one full of books, at an angle as though it had been pulled there hastily. I lifted the lid with some trepidation. There was a charnel smell. It was full of bones, old and new, large and small. They appeared to be human, and they had been gnawed.

The soft thump-thump scampered down the stairs this time, there was no mistake about it. I rushed out on the landing but he had already disappeared again. I descended the stairs, watching carefully. I had the idea that Edgar was going to jump out and try to scare me. The door to the kitchen was standing at a different angle than before. There was a raw smell. When I looked inside I gagged. My God, what had he been doing there? There was blood everywhere. I tiptoed around the dark red splatters on the floor. There was no sign of the source of the blood.

I had no more doubts that Edgar should and must be institutionalized.

The cellar door was standing ajar. My skin was crawling and I couldn't avoid the blood on the floor but I had to look. It was dark down there, pitch black at the bottom of the narrow stair. There was a sharp animal stench that cut through the rank smell of blood. Something moved in the darkness.

Behind me a hinge creaked. I turned and saw a waist-high cupboard door swinging slowly open. A limp and bloody arm flopped out. Edgar had been stuffed in there, what was left of him. The blood was his. He stared at me open-mouthed but saw nothing. He was past seeing. He dropped forward slightly and I could see that the back of his skull had been gnawed away.

It squealed with fury as it scampered up the stairs; It would have had me if I had taken time to turn and look at it. I jumped toward the door and swung around just in time to block its lunge for my throat.

It was the size of a collie. It looked like a rat except for the evil intelligence in its eyes and the human expressiveness of its mouth. And it stood on its hind legs and grappled with the chair with its filthy paws in a way no rat could do.

I doubled up my legs and kicked the chair away as hard as I could. The chair and the rat-thing went sprawling halfway across the kitchen while I rolled out the door and sprang up and grabbed the knob. I got it closed in time to feel a loathsome thud when it slammed into the lower panel. Three times came the muffled boom and the bulge in the panel, then a second's silence. I felt the knob turn against my hand. Its paws were amazingly strong. The knob slowly twisted backward. I heard the latch click out of the socket. All the force I could exert pulling every tendon in my body could barely hold back that door as it pushed me back a

millimeter at a time. Then abruptly the force was gone, the door banged to, the lock clicked back into place.

A trick? I held on desperately, sweating. There was a nauseating scurry in the kitchen. I twisted my head around and looked behind me. I stared at the door again and listened hard. No sound.

I let go the door and ran to the foot of the stairs. I grabbed the small telephone table, letting the phone fall with a clatter. Still no sound from the kitchen. I ran for the front door.

My hand was almost on the knob when I heard the scampering thumps on the porch in front of me. I dropped the telephone table and grabbed the doorknob with both hands.

It whammed against the door twice. I could see the dark shape bobbing around in the dark below the oval window. It jumped up twice so that I could see the sharp discolored gnawing incisors and the baleful glare in its manlike eyes. When it backed up to the edge of the porch I knew what was going to happen and jumped back into the doorway of the study before it came crashing through the glass oval squealing with rage.

Before it could change direction I grabbed a big armchair and heaved it into the doorway. It only covered the opening waist high but at least it was too low for the thing to get under. I knocked a lamp to the floor and picked up the end table under it by one leg.

When it tried to scramble over the back of the chair I slammed the table into it with a sickening thud. But it was too strong and heavy to be knocked back. It grasped the top of the table with its fore-paws and pulled.

I stood with one knee on the chair fencing with the thing as it squirmed and twisted, trying alternately to shake my grip on the table and to get around it. It got up on its hind legs on the back of the chair. I could see its scaly tail lashing behind it. A sudden unexpected thrust of the legs sent me reeling

backward with table and clinging beast rising over my head as I bent backward to keep my balance. The clammy tail whipped forward around my left wrist, I could see the whiskers twitching around the wrinkling muzzle and dark yellow incisors as it squealed and chattered in its fury. I screamed and ran forward against the weight and heaved the table with its unwholesome burden through the doorway above the chair.

My mind was paralyzed with terror, knowing only the frantic need for action in each glaring moment. I instinctively ran for the windows but behind me I could hear the thumping scamper of its run and the powerful thrust of both hind legs and the interval as it flew over the chair. In wordless panic I jumped up on the long couch and ran its length, then scrambled up the back of it onto the wide mantelpiece, smashing a ceramic demon and an ormolu clock to the hearth below. Crouching, I swung my arm back

and caught the monster behind me in midair, sending it twisting to the floor. The incisors slashed my arm; my blood splattered the hearth.

I grabbed up the Masai spear from the wall beside me and turned it around with the point toward the floor. The thing glared at me past the point, grimacing and snarling and twitching its hideous whiskers. In ultimate desperation I thrust forward and down with my full weight, feeling the spear splinter ribs and pass through its rubbery guts and pin it to the floor. I hung in mid-air with my feet on the mantelpiece, clinging to the spear while the rat-thing shrieked and wailed in its death agony.

And as I hung there in space, sickened by the stench of its urine and bowels and feeling its writhing death throes, the siren-like squeals formed themselves into words, a furious string of curses and obscenities, and with its last gasp it shrieked, quite clearly, "I'll be back, little brother!"

# THE PEWTER RING

By Peter H. Cannon

His coming to New York had probably been the smartest move of his life—though he had not begun to think so until, after months of monotonous job-hunting, he had settled on some stimulating and marginally profitable publishing work. Scion of an ancient French Huguenot family, Edmund Aymar had left suburban Westchester for the metropolis of his forefathers, who had been among the island's earlier and more prominent citizens. There he had anticipated making his mark on the world—not as a lawyer or banker or stockbroker, professions customarily pursued by Aymar men—but in one or another of the more Bohemian, less financially remunerative trades.

With the support of inherited money, wisely husbanded by the intervening generations since his great-great-grandfather, John Marshall Aymar, laid the foundation of the modern family fortune before the Civil War, Edmund Aymar was used to enjoying all the privileges of his class. (Educated privately, he had always been a dreamer who felt himself apart from the conventional classroom routine. Given his prep school record as an under-achiever, he had failed like many of his background in these latter days to gain entrance to the Ivy League college traditionally attended by his people.) His independent income covered his basic needs: a one-bedroom, ground-floor rear West Side apartment; a wardrobe of Brooks Brothers clothes; and a freezer filled with Stouffer's dinners. Freed from the anxieties faced by most young men embarking upon careers in the city, Aymar could indulge in cultivating his already richly refined aesthetic sensibilities.

An avid amateur student of architecture, Aymar delighted in strolling past the quaint brownstones that lined the side streets of his neigh-

borhood, picking out such pleasing details as an elegant cornice here or an exquisite balustrade there. On occasion he ventured farther afield, exploring the curved lanes and irregular byways of Greenwich Village and other antique districts of the city. At first the imposing Manhattan skyline served only to oppress his spirit, but in time he came to relish the rugged beauty of those concrete and glass monoliths that soared, especially at night, like so many *Arabian Nights* arabesques to the starless haze above.

He took a keen interest in the history of New York, in particular in the activities of his ancestor, John Marshall Aymar, who had figured so eminently in the city's business, political, and social life in the eighteen-forties and fifties. Spending much of his free time either at the New York Historical Society near him or else at the Museum of the City of New York (a brisk twenty-minute walk across Central Park), Aymar became increasingly fascinated with his great-great-grandfather the more he learned of him. The official accounts depicted the conscientious man of affairs, who had built a shipping empire, contributed generously to the Whig Party, and entertained lavishly at his Fifth Avenue mansion. Contemporary letters and diaries, however, gave hints of the inner man: a seeker after truth and beauty, sensitive and retiring, a poet, author of a slim volume of verse privately published in 1849. Portraits showed him to be slender, youthful, and fair, with the trace of an ethereal smile on delicate lips. (Oddly enough perhaps, Aymar looked nothing like his ancestor—but then everyone told him he strongly resembled his mother.) In no portrait did John Marshall Aymar betray the encroachments of age,

for he had died in his forties of a queer, lingering disease that had baffled his physicians.

Immersed in his researches, Aymar learned as well of the past literary life of the city. He took particular satisfaction in knowing that in 1844 Edgar Allan Poe had lived in a farmhouse, where he had finished The Raven, at a site just two blocks away from him on Broadway. Old photographs showed a white wooden-frame home surrounded by shade trees on a hillside. By the end of the century the house had been razed, the trees cut, the hill leveled. Only a plaque affixed to the present-day Health Spa and Fitness Center reminds the passerby that on this spot once dwelled America's most illustrious author. Aymar was among those who petitioned the mayor to rename a stretch of West 84th Street in Poe's honor; later he was one of those who wrote testy letters to the Times regarding the misspelling "Allen" for "Allan" on the street signs erected by the city.

During the first several years of his New York sojourn, Edmund Aymar took a quiet pride in residing in an almost forgotten, no longer fashionable neighborhood, inhabited at its core by a sizable community of poor Hispanics. As the city as a whole recovered from a period of economic decline, however, prosperity like some insidious, viscous sea-creature began to spread its tentacles north from Lincoln Center along the broad, decayed avenues. In shockingly short time the mom-and-pop variety stores, the laundromats and shoe repairers, the ethnic bars and social clubs, and the plain, low-cost American eateries gave way to chic boutiques, trendy foreign restaurants, and slick singles joints catering to the BBQ crowd. Appalled, Aymar witnessed the pokey, two-story commercial buildings along Broadway succumb in a fever of real estate gluttony to hideous, highrise apartment houses, whose tacky twin towers grotesquely aped the tasteful originals on Central Park West. Like a child who discovers too soon that instead of the stork leaving him

under a cabbage leaf his parents had to engage in a gross physical act to bring about his existence, Aymar realized that the rapid, radical development of the city was not confined to some distant era in the history books, but was happening literally around the corner from him.

Disillusioned, Edmund Aymar retreated increasingly into those arcane studies that already had such a hold on his imagination. He withdrew to the billiards rooms and libraries of certain venerable clubs, where the old traditions were still esteemed among the genteel and bigoted members. His great-great-grandfather had helped to found the athletic club, where according to locker-room legend he had habitually escaped to avoid the demands and cares of business and family. The club library contained his volume of poetry, Damon and Pythias and Ganymede, tenuous verses celebrating the manly ideals of the classical world, which Aymar read and reread for inspiration.

A potent dreamer (in the usual sense of the word) from youth, Aymar often dreamed vividly of early New York: of bands of stoic Red Men stalking meagre game over marsh and meadow; of comical Dutchmen with broad-bore muskets strutting between stepped-gable houses and a wooden wall that would in time become Wall Street; of Negro slaves rioting amidst fire and smoke; of redcoated soldiers, more grimly determined than their Dutch predecessors, seizing illicit arms and being quartered in private homes; of sailors jostling one another on wharves stacked high with barrels and boxes before a forest of ships' masts; of men parading in the street carrying torches and anti-draft placards; of a gloomy, long-bearded fellow inspecting a waterfront warehouse; of a slight, wispy-goated gentleman supervising the construction of a gigantic pedestal on an island off the tip of Manhattan; and—most strikingly—of a blond, bland handsome figure with an enigmatic smile who seemed to be ad-

dressing him, teasing him with some maddening half-memory and the promise of titanic wonders just beyond the limit of ordinary human comprehension. This latter personage, he recognized with a thrill as soon as he woke up, was of course his own great-great-grandfather, John Marshall Aymar.

His ancestor became a larger and larger presence in his dreams, until one night Aymar could discern quite clearly his speech; indeed, his distinguished forebear instructed him to get up, get dressed, grab a flashlight, and go to a certain building site some ten blocks distant, where he would find in the rubble a ring—a pewter ring, to be exact. Not really knowing whether he still slept or was awake, Aymar obeyed and in a short while found himself prowling about in one of the many construction pits that made the West Side resemble Berlin circa 1945. Giving scant thought to the prospect of being picked up for trespassing, he felt as if he were being guided by some preternatural force and within a few minutes located a filth-encrusted object that he believed at first to be a pre-1965 quarter. Closer examination, coupled with an ecstatic shiver of the kind commonly experienced by those who are "born again," convinced him that this had to be what he was after.

Back at his apartment an assiduous application of Gorham silver polish brought forth a gleaming pewter ring, incised with primitive jungle motifs, and inscribed on the inside with what initially appeared to be an alien alphabet but when turned the other way around proved to be an ornate monogram—the initials J.M.A.! A confirmed skeptic of psychic phenomena, Aymar was overcome with confused emotions of horror and elation in the face of such an uncanny and startling discovery. He could not begin to guess at the colossal significance of the pewter ring, but dared to hope he would soon be enlightened. Sleep being out of the question, he passed the remainder of the dark hours

fondling the ring, trying it on, ultimately deciding that it fit perfectly on the fourth finger of his left hand.

He wore the pewter ring to his office, an art gallery off Madison Avenue, where he had recently secured employment as an assistant. Still in a daze, he had scarcely noticed where he was on the bus ride across the park. At his desk, as he was on the verge of attending to some long overdue correspondence, Aymar saw the electric typewriter dissolve before his eyes, exposing not the woodlike surface of the desktop but genuine oak. The Bic ballpoint he customarily used had in turn, he realized upon seizing it, been transformed into a heavier, finer instrument—a fountain pen. An inkwell and stand stood on a blotter where none had stood before. Peering out the second-floor window, he beheld not a stream of fast, noisy motor vehicles but a thoroughfare alive with horse-drawn carriages of every description; men in beaver hats and swallowtail coats; vendors hawking their wares in heavy Irish accents. The weather suddenly warm and foetid; the low hum of the air conditioner was no longer audible.

As if propelled on some vital errand, Aymar rushed down into the street—a street paved with rough, square-cut stones—but he paid this marvel no more heed than the rest. He headed for Fifth Avenue, knowing that there he would find his destination. When he came up to the gate of the Palladian mansion he recognized it instantly as the home of his ancestor. The manservant who answered his rappings at the brass doorknocker seemed to be expecting him, and ushered him into a parlor decorated in the sumptuous Gothic Revival style of the mid-Victorian period. There against an oversize mantel leaned a gentleman in early middle age, dressed in luxurious silks, whose bland, blond features seemed to glow with an otherworldly radiance.

"My dear young fellow; welcome," said John Marshall Aymar.

"You cannot imagine with what delight I have anticipated this meeting." Finding himself at last face to face with the man of his dreams, Aymar was in too much awe to do any more than mutter his thanks. "Ah, you sport the pewter ring; but of course, how else are we united now? It is owing to its agency that you have been able to transcend the barrier." For a moment his ancestor gazed at the ring with singular intensity.

"I have a great deal to impart to you, Edmund, but we cannot tarry here. Should my wife and children happen upon you, I would be sorely tried to explain how I came to be entertaining an unknown relation, a relation who has journeyed from so far away—in time." The servant appeared in the doorway and announced that the hack awaited them. "Come, we shall repair to premises where we can confer without fear of interruption."

On the ride downtown his ancestor kept silent, smiling with the serenity of one seemingly possessed of some vast, cosmic secret. From the enclosed coach Aymar watched the confusion of a hot, dusty, congested city, again accepting with equanimity his presence in a bygone age as somehow part of the natural order of things.

At last they arrived at a quiet side street near the river—Weekawken Street it may have been—and disembarked before a clapboard house with the sign "Saloon" above the entrance. In the dim front room a gang of dusky-skinned sailors huddled at the counter. The barkeeper showed them to a back-room, and poured them a dark liquid out of a labelless amber bottle.

John Marshall Aymar began his narrative by relating how he came to acquire the pewter ring. As part of his charitable work among the poor of the city, he had spent time visiting the Free Men who lived in the shantytown far west of Fifth Avenue. There he had encountered some Africans recently arrived in America via Haiti—"savages" who engaged in occult practices. Im-

pressing them with his eagerness to pierce the veil, he had been granted the privilege of undergoing a physical rite of passage that few dared to brave. He had proved worthy in the process of initiation and had earned the pewter ring, though at a cost: he had contracted a fatal illness, whose subtle course would bring him to an early grave. The sacrifice was necessary, however, in order to attain "immortality."

"I have already had a glimpse of what lies in the Beyond," said his ancestor, who could not repress a smug, condescending smile. "Time is an illusion—all history is fixed in one omega-null continuum, toroidal in shape. Gödel and Rucker of your own century, by the by, are correct in their speculations on the ultimate nature of the space-time synthesis."

He went on to explain that the ring had later been "reclaimed" by his African associates, with whom he had had a falling out. While his powers had been severely diminished, he still was able to exert some control over the "psychic energy" of the ring. Through the agency of dreams he could stretch across the decades and reach his first descendant to reside in the ring's vicinity over a substantial enough period of time. Once that descendant—he, Edmund Aymar—had found the ring (which had been lost again fortuitously after his "death"), then it was a relatively simple matter to summon him back into the past.

"I have worked hard, Edmund, for success in this world. I am an ambitious man." John Marshall Aymar grinned, relishing his triumphs. "I have enjoyed but a mere taste of the ring's glories, and no longer take an interest in the usual diversions of earthly existence. Circumstances have forced me to lead a double-life, but I shan't have to maintain appearances for long.

"You as well can achieve a similar transcendence—and I don't mean the sort of 'transcendental' experience extolled by those New England

prigs, Emerson and Thoreau. It will require the surrender of your bodily shell; but the loss is small when you consider the gains to be had in return. What's another forty years of dilettantish dabbling, when if you choose the path of the pewter ring you can meet my late friend, the editor of the Broadway Journal, at the height of his powers? You can dwell in the New York of any era you wish. Millions of years from today, you may be piqued to know, volcanoes will dominate the horizon and once more New York will be a pastoral paradise, free of the teeming, uncouth hoi-polloi . . .

"I need your help, Edmund. You must give me back the pewter ring, for only then will I have the strength to aid you and secure your ultimate salvation. You shall follow, but first you must return to your own age. You cannot depart unless you release the ring to me. . . . Here, lad, take a little more grog."

Dizzy with strong drink, Aymar had no desire to disappoint his ancestor and yet hesitated to give him the ring. But John Marshall Aymar would brook not the merest hint of opposition. Grinning maniacally, he lunged at Aymar's left hand. Instinctively recolling from the assault, Edmund Aymar lurched clumsily to his feet, upsetting the table and glasses before them. More accustomed to heady beverages than his descendant, the older man regained his balance in a moment and seized him from behind. The two tumbled to the sawdust floor, where they rolled like beasts until their cries brought men rushing in from the outer room. Dark faces filled with cruel anticipation were the youth's final sight before he lost consciousness.

\* \* \*

When Edmund Aymar woke up, bruised and sore, he found himself lying in the street, next to a homeless person also stretched out and disheveled, in front of a familiar house. Indeed, it was the same

building he had entered perhaps hours before, but now it was covered with brown shingles where clapboard had been; too, electric street lamps illuminated the scene, not gas-lights. Aymar made his way to the Sheridan Square subway. That the pewter ring was missing from his finger he was too numb to notice.

In the months that followed, Edmund Aymar wondered whether his coming to New York had been such a good idea after all. He obliquely discussed his "dream" experience with his therapist, sounding him out on the matter of free will versus determinism and the paradoxes inherent in time travel. Eventually he became fed up with the tiresome sessions and, like some Creationist repudiating evolution, dismissed his therapist, unshaken in his belief that heredity is more important than environment and that personality is largely innate. Resigned to whatever fate might bring, indifferent to his usual aesthetic pursuits, he gave up working altogether and scarcely stirred outside his cave-like apartment. He also began to lose weight, to be prone to colds and the slightest infections.

The night before he was supposed to enter the hospital for tests, Edmund Aymar dreamed again of the old things. He was picking his way uncertainly along an unfamiliar path in what he thought was Riverside Park—though it was a wild, unlandscaped Riverside Park. Ahead of him, on an imposing outcropping of rock, he spied a cloaked figure, silhouetted against the setting sun. The man turned to meet his gaze, displaying a head of fine-webbed hair, wide brow, liquid eye, and silken moustache, then vanished into a copse beyond. Gaining the crest of the rock, Aymar beheld a great river, surely the Hudson, whose far shore was an unmarred stretch of cliff topped by an expanse of green rapidly darkening as night closed in. Then from behind he was accosted by the bland, blond form of his ancestor who, as he held out his hand

to reveal a gleaming pewter ring, laughed with deep, sardonic pleasure.

The vision faded, and he realized that he was back in the New York of his own time, in the park at night—where three Hispanic youths were now demanding of him that he "hand it over, mister, or—"

His protests that he no longer had the ring did not satisfy them, and in the ecstatic moment just after the fist struck his cheek and just before he lost consciousness Edmund Aymar felt renewed in his faith—faith in the promises of his ancestor that he soon would be "having it all."

### THE SUMMONING

By Kim L. Neidigh

In the icy heights above the frozen wastes  
Streamers of frigid starlight silently gather,  
Giving form to a shriveled hand of monstrous size,  
Its taloned fingers flexing in unholy anticipation  
As it lowers inexorably toward the shambling figure below—  
The weary traveler seeking forgotten lore  
About to meet the final truth.

# GRAVEYARD ROSES

By Charles Garofalo

Ed Corliss, the caretaker of Jacobstown Cemetery, was underpaid, unsupervised, and lazy. He would have never noticed the roses on his own. It took Jenny Lawrence, who noticed far too many things about her neighbors, even the dead ones, to point it out to him.

"You really think it's right what Katy Andrews is doing with her husband's grave?" she demanded of him one day.

Corliss started up immediately. If Katy Andrews was spitting on Aaron's grave or something like that, he had to do something about it. But at the same time he didn't want to admit to Mrs. Lawrence here he didn't know anything was the matter. It showed he was neglectful.

"Checked Reverend Andrews' grave yesterday," he lied. "Didn't see anything wrong with it."

Jenny Lawrence glared at the caretaker, obviously disgusted with him for not noticing what had caught her attention.

"You mean you find nothing wrong with her turning her husband's grave into a flower garden? You don't think that's disrespectful of the dead?"

"Flowers on the grave's a sign you loved the person," was Corliss' answer. This was what she was making a fuss about, that Katy Andrews was putting flowers on her husband's grave? What did it do to her, make her feel bad that she only put a few lilies on her mother's grave once a year?

"A wreath or spray," snapped Jenny. "Once in a while, say on the anniversary of her husband's death. That would be a sign of respect for the dead. But she's cultivating those rose bushes on the grave. She's got them growing on the grave; she brings water and fertilizer into the cemetery. That's not being respectful to the

dead. It's the opposite, using hallowed ground for a flower garden."

"Well, I'll look into it," said Corliss.

He was careful to make sure Mrs. Lawrence saw him heading for the grave.

Aaron Andrews' grave was marked by an extra large granite monument, a kingsized stone which proclaimed He Worked for the Lord. Corliss happened to know Aaron had purchased the huge slab himself, and had specified what he wanted engraved on it.

Corliss had seen the four rose bushes Mrs. Andrews had planted on the grave before, but he had never really taken a close look at them. They were pretty big, he admitted, although he noted they had been carefully pruned so as not to obscure the epitaph and name. He recalled Mrs. Andrews had planted them four years ago, almost immediately after Corliss had planted her husband. For them to get that large bespoke a lot of care, watering, and fertilizing.

There were currently roses on the four bushes, although at this point in time nearly all of them were drooping and wilting. Corliss recalled that his parents used to call big white roses like these "funeral roses."

Conscience roses, more likely, since Mrs. Andrews would have to be crazy to miss her husband. Aaron Andrews had been the most miserable man this town had known in years, preacher or no. The care she lavished on the plants was probably nothing more than a gesture to silence any guilt she felt over being glad to be rid of the old reprobate.

Corliss had been lucky as far as Reverend Andrews had been concerned. His folks and he had gone to the Baptist church, not the independent sectarian one Andrews

had managed to disgrace. The man had been a demagogue and a dictator the ten years he had been pastor.

Corliss had seen, and heard about, enough of the Reverend's handiwork to have some prejudice against the man. Andrews was a ferocious collection-plate passer; he always had both hands out for money, and he was above neither dunning nor blackmail. Folks who had followed their minister's prescribed methods of child rearing (which involved not only severe discipline but total control and obsessive supervision) were usually rewarded with little terrors worse, no doubt, than a free rein would have produced. Andrews had actually encouraged members of his congregation to spy on fellow members, like a police state. He had also rebuked the erring ones by name from the pulpit, not only for sins like drunkenness or chasing the opposite sex, but for things like reading "occult" horoscopes in newspapers.

There had been other sorts of rumors, too. For instance, some claimed Reverend Andrews often quoted from biblical books and chapters which no one else seemed ever to have heard of.

Corliss recalled some of Andrews' more notorious crimes. How he had preached against the Catholic and even the Baptist churches once his own position was secure. How he had gotten enough influence over Mr. Bowen, owner of Jacobstown's largest department store, to control who was hired and who was fired. How he had talked this same gullible Mr. Bowen into having his son sent to a military school when the boy had done nothing more than complain of family regimen.

Corliss could imagine what life was like for the wife of a petty tyrant like the Reverend. But the man was a minister; he had been an important man in the community. It might have been hypocrisy that made Mrs. Andrews plant roses on her husband's grave instead of dancing on it, but it was the only

way to survive in this town.

Aside from being festooned with rose bushes, the grave was immaculate. Corliss looked up to see Mrs. Lawrence watching him from a distance. He decided this might be a good time to go and make sure none of the older head stones was falling over again.

As he passed through the rows of stones, with the occasional stone shaft or cross, things kept reminding him of the late Reverend Andrews. How Andrews said it was sinful to have a graven image of a cross over a grave, it was idolatrous. How the wealthy families that owned mausoleums would have done better to have given the money to the church (though that didn't keep the Reverend from buying himself that extra large, ornate headstone). Most important, Corliss thought, was how Reverend Andrews was finally murdered in this very graveyard.

Andrews had been trying to cajole Sal Coretti, an Italian lad with emotional problems, into joining his church. The boy's sister had already joined. The Reverend had made his evangelistic appeal on a day when the teen-aged Coretti was placing flowers on his recently deceased parents' graves. Andrews had always had meagre skills in consoling the bereaved. Instead, ignoring the youth's grief, Andrews pressed home the unfortunate warning that both of Coretti's parents were now in hell because they were Roman Catholic. At this piece of intolerance, Coretti had gone berserk and turned on the Reverend, knocking the older man's head against the Ward family shaft. The stone had not been chipped, the bloodstains had all washed off, but people still pointed it out.

Corliss himself mentally marked the spot as he finished his rounds. He had found no work to be done, no damage that needed repairing, not the one time he would have welcomed it. He ended up going back to the impatient Jenny Lawrence.

"She keeps that grave neat as a pin," he explained. "I admit she

goes overboard on the roses, but there's nothing I can do about that."

"Nothing? You should cut those plants down and tell her not to plant any more."

"That wouldn't be right. It's the Andrews family grave. She could make a lot of trouble if I pulled her rose bushes."

"Will it take a complaint to the town council to make you do it? Suppose I decided to tell them how you neglect your job, how you drink, how you let people grow gardens on graves? How long do you think you'd keep your job?"

"Well, at least give me time to . . ."

"You have till tomorrow. Then I go to Alderman McWelter and start complaining."

With that, she left.

Corliss resigned himself to the job. He did not mind digging up the rose bushes so much as he worried about facing Mrs. Andrews. But there was a difference between Mrs. Andrews and Mrs. Lawrence. When Mrs. Andrews complained about him, it would be one big outburst and then it would be over. If Jenny Lawrence wanted him out, she would keep at it until they fired him just to appease her. The old witch had already run several people out of town with her stories and persecutions. In fact she was almost as bad as Andrews had been.

No sense putting off the job. Corliss got out his shovel . . . and spotted the widow Andrews by the grave, watering the roses. The weather had been dry lately, and as Mrs. Lawrence had pointed out, she was obsessive about those roses.

Something inside him rebelled at digging up the widow's treasured plants in her presence. Easier to wait till she had gone somewhere and then do it.

Mrs. Andrews spotted him and waved at him.

"Hello, Mr. Corliss."

"Hi, Mrs. Andrews."

Corliss thought. How to break the news to Mrs. Andrews without

either upsetting or enraging her.

"Mrs. Andrews," he said, hesitating. "I . . . uh . . . I been wondering. Why all the flowers on your husband's grave? Seems a lot of trouble."

Mrs. Andrews kept smiling, but only with her mouth, not her eyes.

"Why, it's no trouble at all. It's been a tradition in my family to plant roses on loved ones' graves. They're supposed to be a protection against evil spirits. And besides, white roses were Aaron's favorite. They should keep him . . . happy."

Corliss couldn't think of anything to say to that. It sounded rehearsed, a formula to be recited to anyone who asked about the roses. He could also see Mrs. Andrews tensing up. It would do him no good to go on.

It was nearly sundown when Corliss got the last of the rose bushes dug up. He had decided to do it in the way he thought would cause the least upset all around: he had pruned them back, dug them up carefully, and wrapped the roots in burlap, leaving a good amount of dirt on them. Tomorrow he would haul them down to Mrs. Andrews and tell her some fool had found a rule in the town statutes against them and was harassing him to remove them. He would offer to transplant them in her own garden for her, just to show he hadn't liked doing it.

Corliss was not in the best of moods. The rose's thorns had several times pricked him right through his work gloves, and it had been a tedious, though not back-breaking, job to smooth over Andrews' mound. Right now he wished Mrs. Lawrence had been right about his drinking as well as loafing. He could have used a swig or two.

He lived in the cottage by the graveyard, these modest accommodations provided without rent as part of his salary. He was not a watchman, but his employers reasoned that anyone trying to break into the cemetery (God alone knew why) would wake him up, and he could

call the police.

The caretaker, as was his wont, dined late. The sounds did not start until after he had sat down to have his stew.

He was on his feet and out of the cottage the second he heard the howls. Someone had been hurt, hurt bad! Maybe a child had tried to climb the walls on a dare and had broken his leg.

Quick, where were they coming from? He scanned the darkened grounds. He had to get there quickly. It sounded like whoever it was was dying.

Corliss then saw the figure stalking towards him in the darkness. The noise was coming from it.

Corliss caught the smell before he got a good look at its source. Then the thing lurched closer, and the caretaker screamed.

The thing was wearing the mouldering rags of a good suit, the sort of suit a man is buried in. Its skin was in rags as well; Corliss could see the bone poking out through it. As Corliss stood, frozen, the walking corpse became aware of him—how, he could not say, as the eyes were long gone. With an angry grunt, it clenched its fists and stumbled towards him.

Corliss fled, stumbling into headstones, tripping, just keeping ahead of the tottering corpse, which managed to be faster than it looked. Slowly the thing gained on him.

As Corliss ran by the compost heap at the side of his cottage, the thing hesitated. The caretaker turned, seeing the thing had slowed. In the moonlight he saw the pile of thorny branches, the ones he'd just put on the heap today.

He grabbed one up just as the corpse went for him again.

The dead man retreated from the rose branch with a shudder. "Protection against evil spirits," Corliss recalled. Still, the thing refused to flee. It backed off, then lurched at him again. Whoever it was, it wanted him, and badly.

Corliss could easily guess which of the graves was now empty. He swore if he survived this night he'd get those bushes back where they belonged. And if Mrs. Lawrence complained about it, he'd hang her from one of the trees overlooking the graveyard!

The roses had not been placed to keep the late unlamented Reverend Andrews happy.

They were to keep him down.

# THE ANTIQUE COFFIN

By Lewis Theobald III

I first chanced upon the shop as I hurriedly returned from my lunch along the crowded streets of the grey eastern city where I worked as an auditor. The time had escaped me, and I saw that I would not regain my office cubicle on time if I were to slowly shoulder my way, as I usually did, through the massed proletarian throng; so leaving the main avenue, I ventured down one of the side streets, the heaped and rotting squalor of which had always caused me to shun them. Perhaps I might make better time this way and avert a reprimand from my overfattuous employer. I rushed as quickly as I dared, taking care even in my haste to thread my way through garbage cans and piles of empty crates that tilted at crazy angles along the cracked and oily sidewalks. Otherwise I would doubtless never have been sufficiently attentive to my surroundings to notice the newly-hung sign betokening the opening of Ormsby's Antiques.

Here was a discovery capable of banishing any fear of an employer's ire. I have never been able easily to pass the open door of an antique dealer, since each seems to me an inviting portal to the past that I love. I have always considered myself as one born out of his time, a misanthrope among men who extoll dull pragmatism and mechanistic mediocrity as the usurping gods of a decadent age. Antique furniture, whether elaborate or plain, polished or ill-kept, serves to link me with that treasured past I know from books and perhaps, I sometimes fancy, from some deeper recess of memory.

I tried the knob, but the door was locked, much to my surprise. A posted sheet, which I only now noticed, indicated that the shop opened in the late afternoon. The proprietor had neglected to note any

hour of closing. All this seemed to me singularly poor business. I guessed, then, that the establishment might be merely a hobby, a pet project for some retired or wealthy person who did not have to depend on steady profits. I marked the times and resolved to try the store again the same evening after work let out, though I did not much fancy the prospect of revisiting the isolated and dingy alley in the dark.

As it happened I made it back to my desk only a minute or two late, and no one took any notice. My short-cut had worked. For the rest of the afternoon I found it difficult to concentrate on my assigned drudgery for the eager expectancy I felt. What frustration awaited me, then, when I found I was compelled to work late. Some minor emergency had called an office mate away, and his work simply had to be finished. But so did my own, and the result was that I stayed hours longer than customary.

Naturally I assumed the little antique shop must long since have closed its doors again. Yet some odd instinct or hunch possessed me to pass by anyway, despite the imagined dangers of the late hour. I was amazed to find Ormsby's Antiques open for business! The shop was dimly lit from within, and window displays were illuminated by ornate table lamps that formed part of the merchandise. In my afternoon haste I had hardly noticed more than the sign featuring the name of the store and the sheet listing its business hours. Now I glowed with a kind of mixed wistfulness and vicarious pride: here were prime specimens of the taste and beauty of the beloved past. Their very existence seemed a rebuke to the tawdry and tedious modernity of the surrounding city block.

An ornate hurricane lamp rested on a fine Empire pier table, whose

ormolu mountings, marble top, and polished mahogany grain gleamed in the warm illumination. In the other window rested an ornately carved and plush fainting couch of the same period. I stood thus transfixed until I reminded myself that more such treasures awaited me within.

The tinny ring of the dangling shop bell announced my entrance, but the proprietor, Mr. Ormsby, was nowhere to be seen. No matter: there were many other new and beautiful acquaintances to be made. I had entered a wonderland of antique, yet timeless, beauty. I could almost feel that I had entered the lost era with which I felt such kinship. I wandered slowly from item to item, here an intricately carved bedstand, there an oak sideboard with stained glass doors. Many of the pieces were truly remarkable, more like museum exhibits that one would never expect to see offered for sale, and certainly not at the surprisingly reasonable prices being asked here. The number of pristine and unique pieces, not only of furniture, but also finely bound books and various types of mementoes was truly astonishing.

As seemed somehow appropriate, I was no longer aware of the passage of time, so lost was I in contemplation and admiration; thus I do not remember how long it was before my host at length presented himself.

"I see you love old things, too," said an aged but firm voice which rang with charm and urbanity even in so short a sentence. I turned to face a slightly stooped, thin old man with silver white hair and a well-trimmed moustache of the same color. He wore a rumpled tweed suit, complete with vest and watch chain, and sported both bow tie and steel-rimmed spectacles. He looked more like an absent-minded professor than a merchant, but I suppose his business really had more in common with the former role than the latter.

Clearly he had been watching me from concealment (or perhaps I simply had not noticed him) for some minutes, enjoying my own enjoyment

of his antique gallery. I could tell this as easily from his demeanor as from his words, and I extended my hand to return his greeting.

"Yes, indeed! You are Mr. Ormsby? I must tell you I have never seen the like of this in the many years I have puttered in antique stores. And I must say I am surprised, pleasantly of course, to find you open at this hour."

Ormsby seemed not to hear my last remark but responded readily enough to my first.

"Yes, yes. It all began as a hobby. Years ago, I inherited a good number of beautiful old pieces, and I just never could get enough of them. I had the means to buy what I wanted, and I'm afraid I overdid it. That's what my late wife used to say! And she was right, because I eventually ran out of space. That's when I got the idea for the store. I decided that I shouldn't keep all these precious things to myself. Even now, it's just a hobby. I want to share the beauty of the past."

So I had been correct about that part of it. It was not his livelihood. I pressed on.

"I somehow suspected that, Mr. Ormsby, but I doubted my theory once I saw the beautiful things you have here. They give every evidence that you trade with the best in the business. It hardly looks like the stock in trade of a dabbler. This marble bust of Charlemagne, for instance . . ."

He cut me off with a smile and a modest wave of the hand.

"I told you, son, most of these things are from my own collection. Yes, there is quite a large stock, but I've been collecting for a long time. What about you, my young friend? Do you collect antiques?"

"Oh, a few pieces, but really nothing to mention. You see, I only have some small rooms in an apartment building not far from here, and between the usurious rent and the tiny space available, I barely have room for the few items that used to be in my grandfather's house. I suppose their value is

more sentimental than anything else, but they do provide a tangible link with more pleasant times."

"Yes, but isn't that just the point of all antiques, my boy? Isn't that precisely why we love them, whatever their monetary value?"

I was by this time overjoyed at thus hearing my own long-cherished opinions spoken by another. Here was a kindred spirit who saw the devotion to antiques as a real vocation, a man whose concern with them was not so much a mercantile nor even an aesthetic affair as a spiritual one.

The hour had now grown very late indeed, and though old Ormsby showed no signs of preparing to close, I had to take my leave. I promised I would soon return and headed for home. Both the day's fatigue and the unknown dangers of the city darkness were forgotten as I reflected that in Mr. Ormsby himself I seemed to have discovered a treasure of the past more precious than any in his shop.

\* \* \*

In the weeks that followed, stretching into months, I visited Ormsby's Antiques often, and the old man and I rapidly became friends. He understood that I was in no position to be a real customer, though I did now and then buy the odd item whose charm I could not resist. But he seemed to value a friend to share his passion for "old things," as he called them, more than he would a regularly paying customer.

There were, alas, very few such customers that I ever saw; and no wonder, given those strange hours of business. I never questioned this, both because I was glad that the arrangement afforded me the chance to talk at length with him after work in such surroundings, and because I assumed he must have reasons of his own that were no business of mine. At first I wondered if Ormsby could be so inexperienced as not to realize the childishly basic fact that a business must be open when people are likely to

be present to buy. Had an earlier life of independent means so sheltered him from even the most rudimentary rules of trade? But no, it soon came out that, though new to this location, he had been long in the antique business.

In fact, so much of a missionary calling did Ormsby deem his shop that he had for some time periodically moved it lock, stock, and barrel from one city and region to another. He felt he must continually move on and give new people a chance to enrich themselves with the beautiful artifacts he made available. He was always seeking others like myself to join him in cherishing and preserving the legacy of a finer time than that to which we found ourselves exiled by "progress." When he could not find receptive souls, he would shake the dust of the place from his feet and move his establishment elsewhere. Of course I assured him I hoped that day would be far distant, that he might even see fit to make this city his permanent location. And so I did hope, though I could plainly see that business was much too sporadic to merit his lingering here long.

We did not actually spend all our time (despite the impression I may have given you) in decrying the mawkish and soulless quality of the modern culture and its shoddy and tasteless products. Most of our long evenings were devoted to Ormsby's fascinating accounts of the history of each piece in the shop. To these fascinating disquisitions I listened in never-diminishing rapt attention. Like individual persons, each chair, each bed, each mantel, each book, has its own colorful story, even its own personality. I found that even the physical beauty of each object seemed enhanced many fold by the knowledge of its unique history. Many such stories were quite amusing, as that of one brass spittoon which had been put to many wholly unintended uses through the years.

Often I found myself wondering how on earth old Ormsby could pos-

sibly be familiar with such details, especially as he seemed cognizant of the most intimate facts concerning virtually every item in the shop. Naturally it occurred to me that the tales he told might be just that—tales, conjured from his imagination during so many lonely hours in an empty shop that he could no longer distinguish memory from fancy. But it made no difference; the stories he told were no less entralling in either case, and if they were not true then they should have been. Of his own life history, Ormsby never spoke. I guessed that past bereavements, such as that of his wife, to which he had once alluded, pained him too much to speak of them. Naturally I respected his reticence, no matter what its causes.

More baffling was the question of how the old man had come to possess some of these pieces in the first place. His stories seldom included the details of how he acquired them. I never suspected anything improper, nor do I now, but the unexplained and unaccountable presence of some quite remarkable items lent a vague air of mystery to the quaint old shop.

Undoubtedly the strangest of the antiques to attract my notice was a fantastically ornate and highly polished mahogany coffin. The detail and extravagance of the thing, though not its actual design, reminded me of the sarcophagi of the ancient pharaohs. I came across it one evening just after arriving, as I waited for Ormsby to finish some errand. The strangely beautiful box was not in plain view, its outlines obscured amid the lines of an intricately latticed Oriental dividing screen placed in front of it. It was while examining the screen that I first noticed the coffin.

I stooped to examine the box. It had the shape of a conventional casket but nothing else about it was at all conventional. There was no crest or coat of arms, but the lid was carved with elaborate scroll-work, the lines of which, together

with scattered inlays of some other wood I could not easily identify, suggested a swirl of autumn leaves. The motif extended to the edges of the lid, eventuating in beautiful raised scalloping, mimicking individual maple leaves hanging on the edges, as if about to blow away. It was quite beautiful, both as a piece of woodcarving and in its peaceful and natural, and I may add wholly nonreligious, symbolism for death.

My finger gently traced the carving on the silver handles on the sides of the box, and impetuously I lifted the lid and glimpsed the shiny white tufted velvet within. Something seemed queer, and it took me a moment to realize that though the velvet inside looked rather worn, the finish of the wood outside did not. Well, perhaps the coffin had been used for displaying bodies in a mortuary, or perhaps the outside had simply been stripped and refinished without the inside having been reupholstered. At any rate, quite a beautiful piece, albeit bizarre.

When the opportunity presented itself later that evening, I could not resist asking my friend about the coffin. Clumsily I remarked on the oddity of expending such extraordinary workmanship on a coffin to be buried forever away from the sight of men. Lurking unvoiced was the twin question of how Ormsby had come by the relic. Certainly no wholesome or legitimate means came readily to mind, but of course for that very reason it would have been, to say the least, embarrassing for me to ask and for him to answer.

Fortunately old Ormsby seemed not at all discomfited by my transparently inquisitorial remark, yet neither did he supply any real information: "Yes, how fortunate that its beauty was rescued from such oblivion, eh?" I laughed politely, perhaps a bit nervously. For this strangest of curiosities, then, he had none of his stories to tell.

I had pressed a little farther than was proper, but no harm

seemed to have been done. Our conversation moved on to other things, and finally it was time for me to be on my way home. My host showed me to the door, and with smiles and parting pleasantries we said goodbye—for the last time, it turned out.

\* \* \*

As the end of the fiscal year rapidly approached, the work at my firm became more hectic and burdensome. Long hours of overtime were now the rule rather than the exception. During the ensuing weeks of mind-numbing tedium I found myself so exhausted at day's end that I fear I shamelessly neglected my friend Ormsby and his dimly-lit shop. Now more than ever would I have relished our late-night sessions, yet less than ever could I afford them; with workdays ending long after sundown and beginning again at the crack of dawn, I simply had to get the sleep. Ormsby's store had no telephone (again that indifference to the rudimentary rules of business!), and at the end of every day I was so fatigued I could not summon the energy to delay my course homeward even long enough to drop by Ormsby's and explain my absence. I kept promising myself I would visit the shop briefly sometime the next week, but I never did.

Finally one afternoon I again found myself taking the short-cut back to the office and of course passing near the shop as I had that first day. I did not expect it to be open at this time of day, but neither did I expect what I saw. Outside in the street playing havoc with the traffic was a mover's truck! Burly workmen were loading huge crates containing, I knew, all the precious treasures of the old man. Dumbfounded, I rushed past them, and against their protests, into the shop. There I found more men carefully packing various items into crates. Ormsby himself was nowhere to be found. Directly the foreman stepped up to me and asked my business. I explained my connection with old Ormsby and expressed

my surprise, my alarm, at this scene. I wondered both at the suddenness of the departure (at least it seemed sudden to me, though in fact I had not spoken with the old man for weeks) and that the shopkeeper himself should not be present to oversee the packing of his beloved "old things." What was amiss?

Of all this the foreman expressed his entire ignorance. All he knew was that arrangements had been made by mail and the key sent. He had to get back to the operation in progress. Apparently satisfied as to my harmless intentions, he left me standing amid the confusion as he stepped away to see to some chore.

I stood completely confused, amazed, and dismayed, all thought of returning promptly to work having been long since forgotten. Ormsby had as much as said he would sooner or later move on, and apparently the time had come. I was sad to lose my friend, as I now saw no chance of keeping in touch with him. The store's contents were being shipped to a warehouse for indefinite storage. Perhaps Ormsby was going ahead to his next destination to make arrangements in the meantime.

I realized there was nothing to do but leave, and as I started for the door, I took a last lingering look at the few items yet unpacked. Among them was the antique coffin with its unique autumn leaf pattern. I reached out to finger the intricate scroll work once more and found myself seized by a strange and pointless urge. Yielding to it, I grasped one of the silver handles and lifted, hoping none of the movers was watching me.

The coffin was now unaccountably heavy, with what I dared not guess. There was no lock, and it would have been easy to lift the lid a crack and glimpse the interior, as I had done once before, but despite an almost desperate curiosity, I dared not open it. I feared for my peace of mind, for my very sanity, if I should see what lay within.

Instead I let go the handle as if it were red hot and almost ran from the shop and down the street, oblivious of the puzzled stares and oaths of the workmen I jostled against in my stumbling flight.

\* \* \*

Much later, it occurred to me that there were available quite ready means of tracing the whereabouts of the old man: trade listings, antique registries and the like, but somehow I never wanted to try, after that day in the deserted storefront. Perhaps surprisingly, I did eventually return to the place, for despite my unreasoning panic at the last, in the wake of my strange friend's departure, I loved the place

for the shelter it had afforded me all those evenings as Ormsby and I shared our love for a bygone day and its relics. For those pleasant months, I had found refuge there from the soul-killing grind of my clerical work. And now standing in the cold before the padlocked door, I made a decision.

For some years now a new sign has swung above the grimy sidewalks, and a new antique shop occupies the storefront. The business hours as well as the items for sale are far more conventional, as is, I dare say, the proprietor. It is my name on the sign, and it is my chosen calling, like my mysterious predecessor, to preserve the evidence of a more graceful past and to share the love of it with others.

## IN THE FOREST

By Bobby G. Warner

The forest was dark and shadowy and filled with such fearful, unknown terrors; but I felt compelled to go there anyway. In the scuttling, hooting, rustling, scurrying darkness I groped my way through low-hanging branches, bushes, vines, and briars; and the swamplike, mouldering ground underfoot. Some hidden, nightshrouded creature; some unseen, feathered fiend; some aging, ancient memory whispered, called, summoned me in a voice which tainted even the hoary, unwholesome atmosphere of that nightmare wood: "Come nigh!" So I did; so I did. Like a penitent sinner I went forward and fell upon my knees on the rank and rotting ground. Like a child in a terrible yet intriguing dream I scanned the darkness, fearful of, yet anticipating that titillating, garish, multi-colored horror I only imagined but could not see. Yet my heart beat not with fear, but with a stronger emotion. I knew that love was near, and it mattered not what form it took. Thus it was that, as I knelt there, the grotesque form which in truth had no form; the hueless pallor of that which was more like death than death itself, settled about me and inflamed my soul to such heights of ecstasy as I had never imagined—and brought to me with its demon-howling fury the greatest peace I have ever known.

# THE ROOM OF THE PENTACLE

By William Fulwiler

"I must apologize for dinner, Doctor," said Edwards, as they had their coffee in the study. "My uncle's will stipulates that I am to dwell in this house without servants or a cook."

The person addressed was a gentleman in his early thirties, tall and thin, with angular, clean-shaven features. Doctor Richard Balfour lifted his gaze from the blazing hearth to the young man seated before him.

"Nonsense, Colin! It was a most enjoyable meal. I am pleased you invited me down from London. A brief holiday in the country will be a welcome change."

Edwards stroked his sparse moustache nervously. His deep green eyes seemed troubled.

"I know you're wondering why I have asked you here, Doctor. Frankly, I need your professional counsel.

"I turn to you not only because you're my friend, but also because you have the highest reputation, both as a doctor of medicine and as an authority on psychical phenomena. I don't know whether my problem is physical or psychical in nature, but in either case I would value your opinion."

"I shall be happy to do whatever I can for you, Colin," said Balfour, his voice unconsciously assuming a professional tone. "Please describe your symptoms. Omit nothing—even a seemingly insignificant detail may be of crucial importance, particularly if psychical forces are involved."

Edwards sighed and shifted uneasily in his chair.

"I have lived here at Greymoor for a month. For the first several days I felt very fit—then the dreams began.

"Have you ever awakened with the realization you've been dreaming, but with no memory of the substance of the dream? That is

the case with my dreams.

"I awaken dizzy and disoriented from these unremembered dreams, and feel physically and emotionally exhausted for several hours afterward."

Dr. Balfour leaned forward in his armchair, intent on the words of his patient.

"Do you have any clue whatever as to the subject matter of these dreams?"

Although the room was comfortably warm, Edwards shuddered.

"I only know that I awaken with a sense of extreme self-disgust, as if I had done something unspeakably vile."

"Why do you suspect psychical forces are involved?" asked Balfour.

"Before I explain further, perhaps I should show you my bed-chamber," said Edwards grimly.

The two men left the study and climbed the main staircase. Edwards opened the first door to the right of the stairhead and motioned for Balfour to enter.

Balfour walked to the doorway and halted, frozen by the sinister significance of the sight before him. The floor was covered by an ancient rug, faded and threadbare. The rug was Indigo blue, encompassing as a central design a large crimson pentacle formed by five intersecting lines. Within each of the five triangles composing the points of the pentacle was a different ideographic symbol, also crimson. Within the pentagon at the center of the pentacle was Edwards' bed, a large four-poster with brass knobs.

Balfour had no wish to enter Edwards' room. He closed the door and turned to his host. "I have seen enough," he said softly. "Shall we return to the study?"

Edwards fidgeted in his chair. He looked at the fire to avoid the

intense gaze of his guest.

"Colin," said Balfour, "I want the whole story. This may be a very serious matter."

Edwards answered slowly but distinctly, still facing the fire.

"My uncle, Doctor Bertram Edwards, was a brilliant scholar; a man who cared only for knowledge. He devoted thirty years of his life to study of the physical sciences. His researches in the fields of biology, physics, and chemistry brought him the respect and admiration of his peers.

"But as he grew older, my uncle became dissatisfied with the progress of his studies. His desire for knowledge became an obsession that could not be satiated by conventional scientific researches.

"To the distress of his family and friends, he abandoned his scientific projects and turned instead to occult studies. He associated with members of obscene cults and acquired a library of blasphemous, forbidden books. Requiring an isolated site for his unholy experiments, he purchased Greymoor as a retreat. He traveled widely, squandering his fortune in a search for occult lore.

"When all of his money was gone, he sought aid from his elder brother, my father. I was twelve years old at the time, and I overheard them arguing in the library. My father refused to give my uncle any money unless he would agree to abandon his obsession with the occult. Uncle was furious, and cursed my father for a fool. He shouted that he would continue his studies and fulfill his glorious destiny. He pledged that, despite my father's stubbornness and stupidity, the Edwards family would one day be the most important in the world. Then he left the house and I never saw him again."

Edwards paused and looked up at his guest. "He died a few months ago. Perhaps you read about it--it was a nine days' wonder in the newspapers. He was discovered in a garret room in Paris, his body burned black. The door was locked,

and there was no sign of fire in the room. There was some controversy, for the police suppressed some details of the matter. His neighbors said he was a sorcerer, and that the devil had come to claim him.

"My uncle left a will. It stipulates that to inherit Greymoor I must dwell here in solitude for a period of six months and sleep in the chamber I have shown you. To keep the estate in the family, I resolved to comply with these conditions.

"That is all I know, Doctor. Does it give you any clue to the nature of my affliction?"

Balfour nodded. He put his hand to his prominent chin, a gesture Edwards recognized from experience as a sign of intense concentration.

"Judging from what you've told me, and from what I saw in your chamber, I believe your uncle set what might be termed a 'psychic trap' for you. The rug is a gateway to another world, and your dreams have opened the way."

"Another world!" exclaimed Edwards. "Doctor, despite my open-mindedness on the subject of psychical phenomena, and the personal experience of my extraordinary dreams, it's difficult for me to accept the possibility that my uncle was actually a practicing sorcerer rather than a deluded madman. After all, this is the reign of Victoria, not James I!"

"Besides, I had no idea that my uncle wished me ill. Why would he set such a 'trap' for me?"

"I did not mean to imply that your uncle wished you ill," said Balfour. "Perhaps in his own way he was attempting to aid you. Remember his curious remark to your father."

"But how could the gateway possibly increase the importance of the family?" asked Edwards.

"That I couldn't say," said Balfour guardedly. "Perhaps your uncle was indeed a madman."

"What concerns me is that the gateway is a highly unstable inter-dimensional disruption, and thus is

potentially very dangerous."

"If we destroy the rug, will that not close the gateway?"

"No," said Balfour. "The way has been opened—the rug is now of no significance. The gate can not be closed from this side."

"Then what should we do?"

Balfour smiled and leaned back in his armchair. "You need do nothing. You're a young man of means, and have no use for this old house. Leave and return to London, or, better yet, take a tour of the Continent. As your physician, I prescribe a long rest to soothe your nerves.

"I believe the gate will close naturally in a short time, but I must remain here until it does. This is a matter of grave importance, and I am quite willing to rough it here for a few weeks or months."

"Certainly not!" protested Edwards. "I wouldn't think of leaving you alone here for weeks. The least I can do is stay here with you."

"No," said Balfour forcefully, "this is something I can best accomplish alone. Frankly, I would prefer to work in solitude."

Edwards frowned and considered the matter. "Well, I agree then, but most reluctantly."

Balfour's guarded manner of speaking had not escaped Edwards' notice. He suspected the doctor was hiding something from him, though he had no idea what it might be. Edwards knew that when Balfour was in a secretive mood, it was useless to question him. The two had come to know each other well since their first meeting a year earlier, when Edwards, then a student at Oxford, attended Balfour's lecture on Chinese philosophy.

Edwards had a sudden thought. "Doctor, the ideographic symbols in the rug—are they Chinese?"

Balfour was thoughtful. "No, they are far older than the Chinese civilization. They are ideographs of the antediluvian continent of Tismar."

\* \* \*

Edwards heeded Balfour's sug-

gestion and took a leisurely tour of Europe; his first long holiday in several years. He wrote frequently to Balfour, always inquiring as to the progress of the doctor's vigil. Balfour's brief replies indicated no change in the situation.

Two months after his departure, Edwards knocked at the threshold of Greymoor. Balfour opened the door. His eyes widened, then narrowed, and his lips formed a taut line in displeasure.

"Well, Doctor, aren't you pleased to see me?" asked Edwards.

"I wasn't expecting you," said Balfour sharply. He stepped aside and Edwards entered. "Why didn't you inform me you planned to return to Greymoor?"

Edwards grinned. "I was afraid you would react exactly as you are reacting now. This situation is my responsibility, not yours. I should like to help you in any way I can—why do you refuse my aid?"

"I told you," said Balfour. "I would prefer to work alone. I can resolve the matter easily without your aid."

"I don't believe you, Doctor," said the young man calmly. "I think you're hiding something from me, and I wish to know what it is."

"Colin, I assure you I am hiding nothing. The problem is serious, but not dangerous. Please trust my judgment and grant me the solitude I require to carry out my purpose."

Edwards laughed and threw up his hands in a half-serious display of frustration.

"You win, Doctor. I still think you're hiding something from me; but as you are too well-aware, I have no choice but to do as you say. Without you I would be helpless to deal with the situation—in fact, I have no idea what the situation actually is! If you insist on solitude, I will leave tomorrow."

Balfour was obviously displeased that Edwards did not choose to leave immediately, but he could not object, for night was approaching, and it was a walk of several miles to the village of Hampton. It was for this very reason Edwards had

chosen to walk to Greymoor rather than hire a dogcart at the village.

The two men ate a cold dinner and by unspoken agreement kept their conversation confined to matters other than sorcery. They retired to chambers on the ground floor.

\* \* \*

Edwards awoke with a jolt. It had seemed to him as if the bed had shifted, but he put this down to imagination. Suddenly a strong tremor rocked the bed, and walls and ceiling creaked with strain.

"Balfour!" he shouted, as he struggled into his trousers. As he reached the passage, he saw Balfour approach carrying a large metal container.

"It's started," said the Imperturbable Balfour, as another, stronger, tremor shook the house. Balfour led the way as they hurried to the hall and out the front door into the cool night air.

"Get away from the house!" warned Balfour. He raised the metal container and splashed the walls of Greymoor with liquid. Edwards detected the odor of kerosene as Balfour struck a match and ignited the oil. The fire blazed high, and the two men retreated a safe distance from the house to watch it burn.

Tremors continued to shake the house. It seemed to be contracting and expanding in a rapidly increasing rhythm, as though intent on tearing itself apart. Shutters banged and shingles flew from the roof. The front walls were almost engulfed in flame. The rhythm of contraction and expansion grew faster and faster, and finally reached its ultimate peak. Abruptly the tremors ceased, and simultaneously an unearthly but vaguely feminine scream of pain rent the air.

"There's a woman in there!" shouted Edwards, and he ran toward the house.

"No! Don't go in there!" called Balfour. He ran after Edwards and caught his arm. Edwards tried desperately to pull away, but could not escape Balfour's grasp. The young man landed a blow to Balfour's jaw and knocked him down.

As Balfour lay on the ground collecting his wits, he heard a loud, shrill chittering, like a chorus of cicadas. He rose and ran to the house, the source of the strange susurration. From the upper floor came a heartrending scream from Edwards.

The front of the house was in flames. Balfour leaped through the flame-fringed doorway and stumbled up the broad stair. Eyes almost blinded by stinging smoke, he blinked away tears and saw Edwards' unconscious form before the half-open door of the room of the pentacle. From the chamber issued a deafening chittering, and furious scraping, bumping sounds, as if great bulks slithered and shambled within.

Bending to grasp Edwards, Balfour glimpsed dozens of luminous green eyes in the dark room. Coughing and staggering, he dragged Edwards down the stair and carried him over the burning threshold. Balfour struggled to a point a safe distance from the house, dropped Edwards, and collapsed exhausted beside him.

Edwards stirred and opened his eyes. They seemed blank, devoid of intelligence.

The flames leaped higher, and the chittering grew shriller and louder. Edwards rose to his knees, gazing at the house with mad green eyes. "My children!" he shrieked. "My children are burning!"

# ANOMALY

By Kim L. Neidigh

Michael Norliss looked up from the eyepiece of his telescope and turned toward his friend.

"The strangest thing just happened."

"What's that?" asked Richard Devon, raising his head from the paper and reaching for his pipe. The porch lights limned his head, lending a spectral cast to his features.

"I was just scanning the stars in Centaurus when suddenly they seemed to waver. Not the usual twinkling, mind you, but a rippling like sunlight passing through ocean waves."

"It's probably just some atmospheric disturbance."

"I suppose so. Damned queer, all the same."

It was as though Satan himself had waved his hand, transforming the lush green hillside into a monstrous charnel house; mangled bodies and bits of flesh were strewn about the landscape, lying within dark pools of drying blood. The fading moans of the dying greeted Dr. Hector Riojas as he stepped forth from the helicopter.

"Holy Mother of God," he whispered to the night wind.

Behind him the other rescue crafters were landing, although he feared there would be very little to rescue. From appearances the airliner must have plummeted into the mountain from an extremely steep angle. Only the tail section remained relatively intact, the rest of the wreckage consisting of metal scraps intermingled with the human debris.

Riojas and the others quickly set to work, examining each survivor, doing everything possible; knowing few, if any, would live to see the dawn.

High in the Andes, a nameless

hermit tended his small herd of goats. Sitting by his tiny fire, he sang songs about great men of old who performed great deeds. A smile filled his weathered face as he sang; a smile which became a frown as he glanced upward at the night sky.

"What is this?" he asked the darkness.

A shimmering passed over the disk of the full moon, like the rippling image of a mirage. Quickly it was there and then, just as quickly, gone.

"The moon trembles! This is an evil omen!"

Fearfully, the hermit crossed himself and huddled closer to the fire.

"Ah, Ramon, why did God allow this terrible thing to happen?" Riojas was seated in the helicopter, on his way to the army base where the three survivors would be transferred to an airplane. There were no adequate facilities nearby, so the patients would have to be transported to Quito.

"Who can know the ways of God, Hector? We can only have faith that He has some purpose for everything."

"I'm sure you are right. Still, you know, I sometimes wonder if perhaps we are not merely the playthings of devils."

"No, I'm not convinced," Michael Norliss looked at Devon and shook his head. "I've been studying the sky for years and I've never seen anything like that. This was eerie; some sort of anomaly."

An amused grin crossed his friend's face. "I see you've been reading Fort again. What do you think it was, some malevolent force from outer space?"

"You can laugh, Richard. But the fact remains that many unexplained events occur in the skies

above us. Flesh and blood fall out of nowhere, strange objects pass overhead, and lights appear where they shouldn't. There are genuine UFOs, you know."

"Yes, but the odds against this specific phenomenon being anything extraordinary must be enormous."

"Perhaps. However, isn't that what people say every time?"

A gnawing hunger had drawn it onward through Infinity, a yearning to fill the emptiness within, to know completion. Now there was a new feeling—anticipation. The moment was coming. It would be soon. Very soon.

"I do not think this one will make it." Such a tragedy, Riojas thought. A pretty young girl. She should be out dancing, laughing, enjoying the company of young men. Instead she lies here, hemorrhaging her life away because there would not be enough plasma. Thankfully, the others had stabilized. He strode to the cockpit to speak with the pilot.

"Captain, how long before we reach Quito?"

"It'll be at least forty-five minutes until we see the city's lights."

"There is no way to get there sooner?"

"Afraid not, Doctor. The winds are unusually treacherous tonight. We're going as fast as we safely can."

"Yes, of course, I'm sorry."

Moving back to his patients, Riojas sat down beside his friend. "Well, Ramon, if there is a purpose to everything, then perhaps our efforts are not entirely futile."

"Now you understand! We are all working to fulfill our destinies."

The pilot turned to his copilot. "Did you see that? Something moved up ahead!"

"Look! There! What's happening to the sky?"

There was no time to say anything more.

Within the rippling turbulence a tiny hole took form. An orifice of palpable blackness; devoid of light, warmth, life—the very antithesis of all we know. The opening expanded, becoming a rip in the atmosphere through which only sterility showed. A sterility which hungered.

The plane was engulfed before anyone could react. And as dissolution overcame him, a mocking laughter came to Riojas. High-pitched, strident; the cackling of a demon. Then there was only the peace of oblivion.

Satiated, the void contracted to a pinpoint and winked out.

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

KIM L. NEIDIGH was born on May 1, 1952. His poems and fiction have appeared in many publications, including Bloodrake, Grue, Alternate Lives, and many other publications. His poem "To Hypnos" was published in the Lovecraft issue of The Count Dracula Fan Club Annual. Well educated, he has worked at many jobs, an experience, he says, that has taught him that "98 percent of all jobs are meaningless." His favorite authors include H. P. Lovecraft, E. A. Poe, H. G. Wells, and Jules Verne.

PETER CANNON is an esteemed Lovecraftian author and scholar. His short novel, Pulptime, in which HPL and F. B. Long appeared as characters, was published by Weirdbook Press; while his The Chronology out of Time: Dates in the Fiction of H. P. Lovecraft has been published by the Necronomicon Press. His fiction has appeared in Crypt of Cthulhu, Eldritch Tales, &c.

WALTER C. DeBILL, JR., has written many Lovecraftian horror tales which have seen print in such books as The Disciples of Cthulhu, Nameless Places, and magazines such as Nyctalops and Etchings & Odysseys. He has always wanted to write Lovecraftian horror that wasn't bound to the Mythos, and "That Which Devours" shows that he has much to offer the genre.

BOBBY G. WARNER is a very prolific writer, having sold between 80 and 90 stories since late 1984. After spending 20-plus years in the Air Force, then returning to the U. S. to finish work on a BA degree in English, he got the writing bug while in his late 40s, proving that it's never too late to start. Among his many fine tales is the truly incredible Lovecraftian story, "The Quiet One," which appeared in Fantasy Macabre #8.

WILLIAM FULWILER is best known for his perceptive scholarly analyses of Lovecraft's work which have appeared in Lovecraft Studies and Crypt of Cthulhu. His poem "Rlyeh Rises" appeared in Dark Fantasy #14, 1977, and a previous story, "Short Cut," appeared in Eldritch Tales #7.

CHARLES GAROFALO writes both novel-length and short fiction. His tales of horror and science fiction have appeared in many magazines including Bloodrake, Crypt of Cthulhu, Dayspring, and Grips.

LEWIS THEOBALD III is obviously a pseudonym. He/she/it does in fact collect antiques, though.

ALLEN KOSZOWSKI is one of horror's finest and busiest artists. He began his career in such publications as Midnight Fantasies and W. H. Pugmire's booklet of tributes to Carl Jacobi, and is now appearing everywhere, having done cover artwork for J. N. Williamson's Masques and Jessica Salmonson's Fantasy & Terror.

JIM GARRISON became involved in the small press in 1972, and has contributed fine work to Weirdbook, The Horror Show, Nyctalops, Etchings & Odysseys, Crypt of Cthulhu, and many others. He has upcoming color covers for the horror anthology More Damnations, available from The Strange Company.



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